



April 5, 2005

Westerly auto dealer is sentenced to 42 months in prison for money laundering

A federal judge has sentenced **Renato M. Garcia** to 42 months in federal prison for money laundering. In December, Garcia admitted that he structured the sale price of motor vehicles he sold at his Westerly dealership, Renskip Auto Sales, so the buyer, who was posing as a drug dealer, could conceal his profits.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentence, which Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres imposed on April 1 in U.S. District Court, Providence. Judge Torres also entered a preliminary order forfeiting to the government Garcia's dealership, 44 vehicles, real estate on Main Street, Westerly, and \$414,078.

In December, Garcia, 36, of 32 East Haddam Colchester Turnpike, East Haddam, Connecticut, pleaded guilty to three counts of money laundering. At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen G. Dambruch said that the government had proof that, on three occasions in March and April 2004, Garcia sold vehicles for cash to a man representing himself as a marijuana and cocaine dealer. He sold the vehicles at prices ranging from \$15,000 to \$17,500 but on each occasion recorded the sale price as under \$10,000. Transactions of \$10,000 or more must be reported to the United States Government.

During one of the sales, Garcia recommended ways of constructing hiding places in vehicles in which to stash drugs. During another, he cautioned the buyer against storing cash with drugs because the money can absorb the smell of the drugs.

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Garcia will forfeit assets that were linked to his money laundering activities – Renskip Auto Sales, located at 85 Main Street, 44 vehicles belonging to the dealership, and money that agents seized last May when Garcia was arrested – \$128,800 from his home and \$285,278 from a Citizens bank account. He will also forfeit a parcel of property at 201 Main Street, Westerly.

The case resulted from a multi-agency investigation by **Westerly Police, Hopkinton Police, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement**. Investigators from the **Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institutions** and the **Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles, Enforcement Division** provided assistance to the investigation. **Rhode Island State Police** provided assistance in the sentencing phase of the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Dambruch, Kenneth P. Madden, and Michael P. Iannotti prosecuted the case.

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